

5079 V. C. 2. 22. 13
*The natural and providential Effects
of national Virtue and Vice con-
sider'd.*

IN A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D, in Part,

T H E L A S T

F A S T - D A Y,

November the 25th, 1741.

By *H. K N I G H T*, M. A. K.

L O N D O N,

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The natural and providential
of national power and
liberty

IN A
SERMON

PREACHED IN
THE LAST

EAST-DAY,



By M. K. W. C. H. A.

LONDON:
Printed for J. Moore, at the
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(Printed in London)



I SAM. xii. 24, 25.

*Only fear the Lord, and serve him
in truth with all your heart: for
consider how great things he hath
done for you. But if ye shall
still do wickedly, ye shall be con-
sumed, both ye and your king.*



It is hop'd, it will soon appear
how suitable the text is to the
present occasion: These are the
words of a very *wise and emi-
nent person*, viz. of *Samuel*, a
prophet, and the chief man in the *Jewish*
nation, — a man of great wisdom, and long
experience in government, and therefore ve-
ry fit to give his opinion concerning the
real causes of the prosperity, or ruin of any
nation whatever. And the text is worthy
our careful consideration, not only upon
his account, whose the words are, but on

the account of *the occasion* upon which they were spoken, which was a very particular and extraordinary one, when he was resigning the government of *Israel* into the hands of their new king: he resigns his post and power with a most solemn protestation of his own integrity, and with an appeal to the publick, whether he had abused his power, to the defrauding or oppressing any, or to the enriching himself by bribery. They justified him intirely. Nay, he appealed to God himself as witness of his innocence in the management of the great trust that had been lodged in him, v. 5. Then he upbraids them with their ingratitude to God, time after time, telling them neither they nor their ancestors were pleased with any thing God did, neither with the laws he gave them, nor with the governors he raised and sent them; and that now at last, on a sudden fright they were put into, by *Nabash*, king of *Ammon*, they were resolved to have a king; and behold, he saith, *the Lord has set a king over you*. Yet he tells them, that they might be a very happy people, notwithstanding this foolish humour they were in at this time, if they would only be virtuous, v. 14, 15. But this being a matter of the greatest importance, he insisted more particularly on it: when thunder and rain had

had affrighted them, and they all came trembling to him, praying, and confessing the folly and iniquity of the late election they had made of king *Saul*; he counselled them not to fear, if they wou'd not forsake God: and, for his own part, tho' they had by no means treated him well, he wou'd not cease to pray for them, and give them his best advice. *But I will teach you the good and right way.* Then come in the words of the text, which afford us the following observations.

I. Virtue and religion are the strength and glory of any nation, king and subjects. *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart.*

II. Vice is the ruin of a kingdom, *but if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king.*

III. National blessings are a proper argument to dissuade a people from vice, and excite them to the practice of virtue and true religion. *For consider what great things the Lord has done for you.*

I. *Obs.* Virtue and religion are the strength and glory of any nation. *Only fear, &c.*

1st, Righteousness *in itself* tends to the welfare of any people. Happy are its effects upon man, considered in his *single* or *social*

social capacity ; but it is only in the latter respect, that we are at present to consider the *natural effects* of virtue on man. It is this, that has a friendly influence upon the body and mind, and consequently fits man for being an useful member of society : It inspires into him amiable affections towards his fellow-members, according to the relations and circumstances they are severally in, on every hand ; as gratitude to friends, a forgiving temper to enemies, an inward pleasure in the honest prosperity of both, even such as are not relations, nor particular acquaintance and friends, real compassion for the afflicted, a noble benevolence to all of every rank and sect ; and, in fine, a steady resolution to give every one his due : thus is the man *form'd* and *dispos'd*, who is truly virtuous ; this is his *true*, and *real*, and not *imaginary* character ; and of this character, there are some in reality, and not merely in an *Eutopian* description.

So fit is every one thus attempered for human society, that it is a great pity all in society are not such. Let the state of publick society be what it will, war or peace, the virtuous man is the fittest for it ; if the nation he belongs to be in peace, he will gladly enjoy this blessing, and endeavour to secure the continuance of it, both by his prayers and actions. He may indeed be called

led a *troubler* of his country, a man of sedition, or heresy, for his upright behaviour in religion; a disturber of the publick quiet, one given to change, and who turns the world upside down: Thus are even the glittering stars call'd bears, wolves, lions, &c. by the *Astronomer*; nay, thus were many, who shall for ever be above them, and *shine as the stars in the firmament, and even as the sun*, once call'd by the *persecutor*. However, the virtuous man disturbs no true peace, but he may strive to dissolve wicked combinations of oppressors, civil and ecclesiastical, — and this he ought to do.

Let his country be engag'd in war, he is likely to be the most useful to it, in this unhappy state, as religion is the source of the firmest courage that can possess the heart; *the righteous is as bold as a lion, but the wicked flees when none pursues*, and is affrighted at his own shadow. A truly pious soldier, whether in a publick, or private capacity, proves a much braver man than the most fool-hardy sinner, because he fights, as he believes, for his God and religion, as well as his king and country; whereas the sinner fights, and resigns his life, either for he knows not what, or for his pay, or something else as mean. What should the man dread, who dreads not God
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nor damnation servilely? Therefore a man who has good hope towards God, and a delightful prospect beyond death and the grave into the after-state, has reason to be intrepid amidst the greatest dangers by sea or land, and is the fittest man to face an enemy, to mount a breach, or scale a wall, or give a broad-side, especially, if at any time, besides the courage common to him and others, he should be endued with such as is *supernatural*, which we have many instances of, both in sacred and profane story; — in the former, especially, as *Gideon*, *Baruch*, *Sampson*, *Jephthah*, *David*, &c. — Virtue procures also *reputation* abroad among neighbouring states and kingdoms, and so much reputation, so much power, as many observe, in particular, *Tacitus*, that excellent historian, who says, that “ governments are supported and maintained
 “ more by their credit and reputation a-
 “ broad, than by foreign wars, tho’ suc-
 “ cessful.” When the prince is wise and virtuous, careful to promote the ends of government among his subjects, which are their protection and prosperity, scorning to pursue any selfish end to their prejudice, and at the same time religiously observant of all wise treaties with other states: and when his subjects cordially love, honour, and obey him as their Father; I say, when there

is nothing but mutual love and harmony betwixt prince and people, founded upon a chearful discharge of their respective offices to one another; happy are the people that are in such a case, and happy the prince too; their influence abroad in neighbouring states and courts must be great, while a nation govern'd by a foolish, or arbitrary prince, or mercenary ministers, divided perhaps among themselves, and alienated several of them from him, is despised abroad, and trampled upon by almost any insolent court, and becomes an easy prey to any ambitious and oppressive power. — In a word, when magistrates look on themselves as sent for the punishment of evil doers, and for a praise of them that do well, and act accordingly: when laws are made with a steady view to the good of the publick, and impartially, as well as diligently executed: when persons in all the different stations of life carefully perform their respective duties, any one may see, that from hence must arise, in *necessary, evident, and immediate consequence*, a most happy state of things indeed, such as may be most earnestly wished for, but too happy to be expected in a world so thoughtless and inconsiderate as ours.

2dly, National virtue is a nation's great interest, thro' *the providence* of God. He is

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the king of kings, and as such, puts down or exalts the great ones of the earth, according as in infinite wisdom he sees good ; he casts some from their thrones, and sets up others in their stead ; he breaks scepters, and confounds the deepest schemes. The devil may say, " he gives the kingdoms of " this world to whom he pleases," but he is liar, and the father of lies : — it is God, the most high, that rules in the kingdoms of the earth. And as the righteous Lord loves the righteous, and his countenance beholds the upright, in their single capacity, so it is with him, in regard to virtuous nations, which he rewards with present blessings, such as a fruitful soil, a healthful air, peace at home, influence and reputation abroad, and victory in war. Which last, particularly we are now assembled together to beg of God, the Lord of hosts, and therefore deserves to be singled out, and taken a little under our present consideration.

It is indeed the will of God, that people should live together in peace and concord, and not fall out and kill one another : This cannot be agreeable in itself to him, who is the God of peace and order, and not of confusion : wars and fightings arise, not originally from his decree, but from the lusts of men that war within them,

them, as the apostle *James* assures us. As men will differ and go to war, God superintends it, and permits, or directs the issue as he sees proper, making victory attend what side he pleases; therefore he is frequently stiled by the inspired writers, *the Lord of hosts*: and among the heathens, *Fortune* was a goddess, by which, the wiser among them understood *divine Providence*, as *Plutarch* informs us; who observes, at *Rome*, there was no temple dedicated to valour and conduct, but a very stately one to fortune, signifying that the *Romans* ascribed their success, particularly in war, more to Providence than to themselves, or any thing else. So that observation of *Solomon*, ^a *That the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but safety, i. e. victory, is of the Lord*; was made also by the wiser part of the heathen world. In holy writ, we have an account of several really miraculous defeats, as of *Pharaoh* and his host in the red sea, of *Sisera*, of the numerous army of the *Assyrians*, of which 185000 men were slain in one night, &c. There was no possible avoiding to acknowledge the hand of God, in these instances. And, no doubt, God often does the same, but in different ways, not miraculous, but suitable to the ordinary course of things.

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All

^a Prov. xxi. 30.

All *second* causes, *natural* and *voluntary*, are under his controul; the former, such as rain, hail, stormy winds, calms, and every thing else in the material world are the instruments, *mere instruments* of his Providence, and properly speaking, *no causes* at all, any more than the tools, or instruments of any mechanick. If the sun shine, the winds bluster, the tides flow, the hail rattle, the thunder roar, &c. it is God, or some intelligent being under him does all; and untelligent, *inert matter*, can't do any thing whatever of itself, any more than the carpenter's ax rises up and cleaves the wood of itself, or the husbandman's plough runs and cuts the furrow. Much indeed has been said of nature, and her effects; but in reality, it is nothing but God's workmanship, and her effects are his effects. And as to *voluntary causes*, the sole real causes; all these, excepting the first cause of all, are at the divine command, whether angels in heaven or hell, or men on earth, both good and bad: good angels are ministering spirits to God, and so are bad ones, the former with, the latter against their consent; and they have been employed in erecting and demolishing of kingdoms, as appears from the book of *Daniel*, particularly.

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As to *human* causes; the hearts of kings and subjects too are in his hands; all their power and wisdom are dependent upon him, and all their schemes for war or peace under his eye, and at his disposal. But surely, it is needless to say more upon peace and war, those two grand circumstances of the state of any society, being under the divine superintendency, seeing, to deny this, would be worse than heathenish. — God then, as Lord of hosts, we find very kind to the people of *Israel*, in the affairs of peace and war: and, with regard to the *Roman* state, we may say, from a careful perusal of the history of it, with *St. Austin*, that “ its great and long success was a favour bestowed by divine Providence, for the many remarkable virtues that the *antient Romans* cultivated”. In a word, God is the governor among the nations; and the righteous Lord loves the righteous; he has evidenc’d his regard for national virtue, in numberless instances of victory on one side, and defeat on the other; so, that from his *perfections* and *actual Providence*, a virtuous people have encouragement sufficient to hope for his blessing upon their arms, when their cause is good, when it is in wise hands, and if they commit it to his watchful Providence, in the use of proper methods. What is it such a people may not promise themselves,
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in a just defence of such a cause, from divine Providence, especially if their soldiery and marines be prudent, pious, and brave men? But,

II. *Obj.* We are to change the prospect, and consider how national iniquity is the ruin of a people. *But if ye do wickedly, ye shall be destroyed, both you and your king.*

For, *1st*, National iniquity is, in its own nature, destructive of any state. Vice, as far as it prevails, is pernicious to man in his *single capacity*, as poyson to his body, and the disgrace and vexation of his soul. Now, as all societies, great or small, are constituted of individuals; therefore, what sin is to man in his single capacity, that it must be to him, in a *social relation*. It is this that destroys the peace, and disturbs the order, that defaces the beauty, and obstructs the happiness of families, or churches, of cities, or nations. To what else are enmities, and other grievances in families, or vicinities owing? It is some branch or other of vice that at first sets a man against himself, and then one against another, one member of a family against another, and one neighbour against another, and one kingdom against another: all contentions and differences, private or publick, proceed from this accursed source. And as to other evils, incident
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to society, as poverty, cowardice, stupidity, &c. they proceed from the same vile original: does *personal idleness* cloath a man with rags? when it is *national*, it has the like effect: do intemperance and luxury, when personal, breed want, disorder, and several other evils? so they do, when national. Are there several vices that dispirit and enfeeble man, both in mind and body? When the same vices are national, they are like a pestilential infection, that breeds epidemic diseases, and spreads feebleness, paleness, pain, and death, all around. A slothful wretch, or a debauch'd sinner, any sort of an abandon'd creature, is a slothful, or a debauched nation, in miniature.

Yet farther, as a debauch'd and distemper'd wretch conveys frequently many of the miserable effects of his vicious courses to his offspring; so national intemperance and debauchery breed diseases; and these being convey'd from one generation to another, emasculate the national strength and firmness, like some hereditary family diseases. In fine, seditions and insurrections, rebellions and civil wars, or a nation divided against itself, and which, therefore, is in a likely way for ruin; all is owing to faulty causes on one side or the other, or rather on both. This wretched state of a nation, may be owing to a most groundless
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pique against a particular family, and to a doating mad fondness for another. You can easily apply this observation to our case not long ago, when there was a considerable party among us strangely prejudic'd against the present royal family, and madly devoted to the pretended remains of the *Stuarts*; a family that makes such a figure in history from their origin to their extinction, so disagreeable on almost all accounts, as perhaps, no one else does, either in the *English*, or any foreign annals. But to speak the truth; *rebellions*, as they are call'd, are frequently not so much the fault of the rebels, as of the persons rebelled against, which was the real case in this nation an hundred years ago, *viz.* in forty-one, when the parliament rose up in arms, which they were forced to, in a just defence of themselves, and their fellow-subjects, and was not their fault, but his, against whom they rose. Sometimes, such unhappy commotions in states are owing to the vices of subjects, but oftner to those of their governors, as their oppression, haughtiness, tyranny, and other royal crimes. Wars betwixt one nation and another, are likewise the effect of some wrong temper or other; as ambition, or revenge, the lust of dominion, or some such lust. In short, sin leads private men and princes to committing

mitting injury, and injury to enmity and animosity, and these to strife, confusion, and every evil work ; for there is a concatenation, or a mutual connection betwixt one sin and another ; and therefore one leads to another, as one link of a chain, when drawn, draws all the other after it : and the upshot of all is misery in some form or other. But,

2dly, National sin is the ruin of a people, by the appointment and Providence of God. As the righteous Lord loves the righteous, he is also angry with the wicked every day ; and as He is offended at every wicked individual, so he must, of consequence, be offended at a wicked community, whether a nation, or an empire, seeing it must consist of wicked individuals. Therefore, as the government of the whole universe is continually in his hands, it is nothing but what may be look'd for, that He should shew his wrath, and make his supreme power known upon a wicked people, in some way or other. Accordingly, in sacred scripture, he has threatned wicked nations with judgments, if they would not reform ; and he has been as severe as his word, as in the deluge of the old world, in the overthrow of *Sodom*, in the captivity of *Israel*, and then of *Judab*, in the ruin of *Babylon*, and many other such instances

recorded in holy writ. If a people will not reform, God will, sooner or later, make an example of them. If a nation, especially highly favoured of him, will put themselves off with the form and shadow of religion, if they will live in envy, hatred, and oppression of one another, and be proud, intemperate, and vicious; as truly as God is a righteous and pure Being, so certainly will their ruin come by one means or other; by civil feuds, and wars, or enemies abroad, or by the immediate hand of God in his judgments. And very just is it for him to destroy a wicked nation, because political bodies, as such, cannot be rewarded or punished but in this world; for, in the next, bodies that were incorporate here, must be dissolved. Therefore, no wonder, if he turn a fruitful land into barrenness and into an *aceldama*, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. But of this, more hereafter. Let us proceed to the

III^d *Obs.* The consideration of God's goodness to any nation, is a proper method for preserving their innocence, or reforming them. *Consider how great things God has done for you.* Indeed, God has done more for some countries than others, in consequence of the formation of this globe of ours; some are as a fruitful garden

den, or a paradise, others chiefly barren mountains or sandy desarts; some are exceeding cold, others exceeding hot, according to their situation on the globe; some at certain times in long darkness, *viz.* for two, or three, or four, nay, for six months together; others have a more agreeable proportion of day and night; some are placed in a pleasant and salubrious air, others again in the contrary; and hence is it, that some nations are in general dull and flegmatic, others the reverse: but, of our own nation, it is observed (truly, it is hoped) that its genius is between the northern saturnine and the southern volatile constitutions. I shall now take notice only of one natural advantage more, belonging to our native soil, which is its being encompassed quite about with a deep channel, which secures us from the sudden incursions of our enemies around us, on the other side of the water: so that our seat is in the midst of the seas, like *Tyrus* of old, and our ships, both of trade and war, so many, as no two kingdoms on earth can shew.—But let us proceed to the consideration of *providential* national blessings. As our soil is generally good, so we are favoured with a *fruitful* season, such this year as never was known in this generation; a season too that came very opportunely, when grain of all sorts was almost consumed all

through the kingdom: but now such is our plenty, that we have enough of our selves, and to spare for other countries: nay, how much of our cloth, as well as our corn is transported, and thus how many do we feed and cloath abroad with our corn, or our manufactures?—The national *health* too has continued a good while. Plagues have been making ruinous havock in severall other places. We are freed almost intirely from *earthquakes*, those dreadful terrestrial convulsions, which have buried not only families, but towns also at once in other countries: and what damage has been done, and what multitudes swept away by *land-floods*, not long since in *France* and *Germany*, while we have scarce suffered any thing this way? Happy is it for us, that our native country is not the *scene of war*, like some countries not far off; but peace reigns in our borders, and prosperity in our palaces; while we might be rent in pieces by civil wars, or destroyed by a foreign army, as other places are at no great distance. But let us consider more valuable blessings bestowed on us than even the great advantages we have just hinted. A great national blessing is the *civil government*; which is well framed, in a comparative view, however, as it is free from the miseries of arbitrary rule on one hand, and
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of anarchy on the other. Under this government, by the three estates of the realm, *viz.* the king, lords and commons, we securely enjoy those two happy fruits of all good government, *liberty* and *property*; liberty to say, and do as we list, provided we keep within any tolerable bounds; and property, which even the king, with all the prerogatives of the crown cannot justly deprive us of. True, we pay this and the other tribute and tax, but not without our own consent, in effect, as they are imposed upon us by our representatives in the lower house of parliament, together with the king and house of lords. But the supreme blessing we have under the present government is, an *universal toleration* of all, Papists being not hinder'd from going to mass, by the executive power;—a blessing denied to Protestants in most of the popish countries; a blessing still remaining among us, after all the vigorous endeavours of its enemies, time after time, to take it from us, particularly after the vigorous efforts in Queen *Ann's* reign, and the rebellion in *George* the first's reign; nay, which is the most observeable, notwithstanding the ingratitude of many, from whom better things might have been expected, and their misimprovement of it.

I N F E R E N C E S.

I. A nation should inform itself well what is *national sin*, and *national virtue*, seeing their effects upon society are very great. Should every man understand what is good for his health, and what the contrary; and is he a fool who is not his own physician, after having seen forty years? as foolish are they, in a social capacity, who do not as soon see how virtue and vice affect a society. And yet how much are many mistaken herein, some one way, others another! some *will not* see the benign influence of national virtue on one hand, and the dire effects of national vice on the other: others are overlooking such as are evidently virtues, and vices, in a people, and substituting *imaginary ones*; e. g. with some, putting to death King *Charles* the first, keeping out the Pretender from among us, and tolerating, what they call, schism and heresy, are great and crying sins of this nation, and not to be forgiven, — till they know not when; sins that are not fit to be compared to the barefaced immoralities among us, as cursing, profaneness, intemperance and uncleanness; these are (in their account) but spots, to those enormous and unparallelled crimes. But, alas, this is a mere delusion, and so obvious, and undeniable.

deniable a one, that it would be loss of time, and an affront offered to any, almost, to expose it. Worthy are they of sorrow indeed, who grieve, mourn, and afflict themselves in secret for such sins as those. *As much mistaken* are some too about national virtues, which they suppose are unanimity, uniformity, ceremoniousness, keeping a strict hand upon Dissenters and Non-conformists from the establish'd faith and worship, &c.

National sins are national impiety, profaneness and immorality, transgressions of God and nature's laws, and not putting to death a man about an hundred years ago, nor hindering a tyrant, with his pretensions of royal birth, and hereditary right, from plaguing and destroying us, nor granting people an undisturbed use and enjoyment of the unalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. On the contrary, national virtues are not mere speculations, or any external rites, but righteousness, judgment, mercy, and such like. As to national sin; it is no hard matter to settle the true notion hereof; it is *the prevalence* of vice in a nation, and is then indeed national, when it breaks out like a mighty torrent, raging and threatening, to sweep all before it, as tho' the fountains of the great deep were broken up, hell beneath were broken loose, and the prisoners there had shaken off their fetters,

fetters, and were come upon earth; when atheism, infidelity, and all manner of wickedness is grown barefaced, and impudent, and men not only neglect religion, but contemn it; when vice spreads thro' all ranks, and is entertained by the priest, as well as his people; especially, when iniquity is established by law, the civil magistrate promotes it, and the people are ready to humour him; in a word, when the religion of a nation is little but external and ritual, their piety is only superstition, or not much better, and their manners profligate. Miserable are the people that are in such a case, and near to destruction, especially if they are a nation highly favoured of heaven with temporal and spiritual blessings, and with many great deliverances from the hostile and destructive attempts of their malevolent neighbours.

When this was the case with *Israel* of old; when they added impudence to their obstinacy, and made a mock of his prophets, and their minatory prophecies, God wou'd bear with them no longer. ^b A sad symptom is it in a people, to laugh at the means of their cure and safety, and what will provoke God to *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes; when their fear comes as a desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind.*— Now

^b 2 Chr. xxxvi. 16. Jer. xxiii. 34; 36. Exek. xxxiii. 31.

Now, as to national virtue; this has been described to be *the prevalence* of real virtue in a people; and then does it prevail, indeed, when good laws are made and executed, when prince and people endeavour to discharge their respective duties, when the faith of a nation is a firm belief of the great principles of religion, its piety is substantial, and their mutual behaviour to one another is benevolent and christian. Happy they, who are in this case!

2. God is supreme *governor* among the nations. This appears even from nature's light, much more from that of revelation, which always ascribes the great revolutions in states and kingdoms to God, one way or another, either permitting, or directing them, and even bringing them to pass.

In respect to the ruin of a people; to this end, God takes away the wisdom of the wise, the understanding of the prudent, and the courage of the brave; so that they stand amazed, or are more apt to quarrel with one another, than to consult the general good. This is an observation verified, particularly in the case of *Egypt*; first their courage failed them ^a. And an ill sign it is, when people want courage, and are for buying of peace with their enemies on any base terms, rather than dare to win it with

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^a Isai. xix. 1; 3; 16.

the sword. It is stupidity in a nation, not to apprehend danger when it is nigh: and it is base cowardice to apprehend it, and not endeavour to prevent it. Again, when their courage was gone, so was their prudence^d. On the other hand, when God raises up any nation to be a scourge to another, he gives it what the other wants, courage, wisdom, and success, beyond all their hopes. Look over all the mighty revolutions in kingdoms and empires, and you'll find this true: when God was about to punish the *Assyrian* empire for their sins, the *Babylonian* rose up so soon, and spread so fast, that nothing could stand before it, not all the alliances and united forces of *Judah*, *Edom*, *Moab*, *Tyre*, *Sidon* and *Egypt*; first *Judah* drank of the cup of God's wrath, and trembled, and went into captivity; then followed the dissolutions of the other states and nations, as *Edom*, *Moab*, &c. At last the cup came to *Niniveh*, and she was destroyed for repenting of her repentance. And, when the sins of *Babylon* call'd for divine vengeance, God named *Cyrus* long before he was born, and at length raised him up to triumph over it. And for the *Macedonian* empire; it was not so much *Alexander's* prowess and conduct, as his adversaries folly and cowardice, that gained him

^c Isai. xix. 2; 11; 13, 14.

him his amazing victories and conquests. What are the greatest armies and fleets, and other warlike preparations, when God designs to throw down any government? what strange havock did the rough and barbarous nations of the North, the *Goths*, the *Vandals*, *Hunns*, and the rest, make in a little time, in the next and fourth empire of the *Romans*. Such were their successes, that wise observers could not but believe, that God was with them: and *Attilas*, one of their greatest generals, thought he found himself under a *supernatural impetus*, and met with success, so much unexpected, that he call'd himself *God's scourge*, to punish the wickedness of Christians. Even *Machiavel* takes notice of so great a difference in the conduct and success of the *Romans*, that he saith, they could hardly be supposed to be the same people. After all, events, particularly of war, are not always according to the probability of their causes, as *Solomon* observes. Thus when God was displeased with *Israel* for the accursed thing, in *Joshua's* time, three-thousand of them fled before only thirty-six of the men of *Ai*. From the air, he can pour down hail-stones, and defeat an army, as he did the *Ammonites*; or send an angel to discomfot them, as he did to *Sennacharib's* host; or fire to consume them, as he did against those that came

against *Elijah*; or water to overflow them, as he did by the *Egyptians*; nay, he can make the dust of the earth start up into armies of flies, or lice, or what else he pleases, which the greatest generals, and the most *veteran* troops cannot defeat. Yes; he sits in the heavens, confounding human schemes, blasting the most formidable powers, shaming human confidence, and frustrating presumptuous hopes, as the *Greek* poet teaches us, when he introduces his *swift-footed*, and greatest hero, *Achilles*, wounded in his heel. Prayer, therefore, and praise to him, are both infinitely reasonable; he is a present help, and an inexhaustible spring of all blessings. But,

3. Hence the supreme civil magistrate may learn what should be his great concern, *viz.* that himself, and his people may be virtuous: that they should be virtuous, and not enslaved, intimidated, and impoverished; and not that they should even be all of one particular persuasion and religion, tho' it be his own. To a good natured prince, it cannot be a pleasure to rule over a poor and abject people, but it must be the contrary: and to a virtuous one, it cannot be a pleasure to see his subjects even universally of his religion, while this external uniformity is owing to compulsion, which can produce nothing better

ter than dissimulation and hypocrisy : but to rule over a nation, cultivating an awful regard to God, and mutual benevolence among themselves, even amidst a thousand little differences of a political, and religious kind, must yield elegant satisfaction to the breast of a wise and virtuous ruler. Besides, as the interests of prince and people are closely connected, it is for his interest to promote virtue amongst them, all he can, by his own example, and by good laws, since, as he may smart for their vices, as well as they for his, so he may fare better for their virtues, as well as they may for his, under the divine government. Upon supposition of his people being virtuous, he also might live a stranger to uneasy suspicions and fears of domestick insurrections and rebellions, and expect nothing from them but a most tender concern for his safety and happiness, as well as their own ; and in case of a foreign invasion, he might promise himself that they would assist him with both their blood and treasure. A prince of such a people, what is there he might not expect from his God and his subjects in any emergency, especially, if he also be virtuous ? — Which ought to be his first and chief concern, both with regard to his present welfare, and his future happiness ; for *this* certainly depends on his
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own personal virtue, and *that* too is promoted by it. May they who rule over men, be men fearing God, and hating all vice.

4. Hence subjects may also learn what sort of a prince they should in all reason desire, *viz.* one of a wise, and virtuous character. A prince of a vicious character, in particular, one who is proud, haughty, cruel, and avaritious, can give his subjects no other than uneasy expectations from him. Stupid to the last degree must that people be, who knowingly elect such a one, let his birth-right be what it will: and easy is it to say what they are, who tamely bow down, and suffer such an one to gratify his wicked lusts, in oppressing, and tyrannizing over them, if Providence has put it in their power to relieve themselves. Resistance is like a desperate remedy, to be used only in desperate cases, like our's in forty-one, or eighty-eight: but not like our own; now we have a prince that governs by law, and not by humour. So far happy are we at present; and may we be still more and more so under his future auspicious reign. However, a people is more concerned in the good, or bad character of their prince, than is commonly thought. In sacred history, we find the sins of courts brought judgments on the people, as *David's* numbering the people, was followed with a grievous

grievous pestilence^e, and *Saul's* sin brought a three years famine; *Judah* smarted for *Manasseh's* sin, and *Israel* for *Abab's*, *Jezebel's*, and *Foram's*^f. The same observation is made by heathens, that *kings play the fool, and the people are punished*; or in *Solomon's* language.^g *As a roaring lion, or a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people. The prince that wants understanding, is also a great oppressor.*

THE CONCLUSION.

And now may we all, as we love a good God, our king and country, nay ourselves, apply the preceding discourse. May it persuade us to a personal reformation, the beginning of a more extensive one, whether of a family, or even of a nation. Let us hate and shun all vicious dispositions and practices, and we shall not feel their pernicious consequences; let us cultivate all virtuous tempers, and live a virtuous life, and we shall find the effects happy here and hereafter. Masters of families, your trust is great, and your good or bad discharge of it of greater importance, and more extensive influence, than you may think: therefore let paternal affection, let the

^e 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.
xxviii. 15, 16.

^f Zech. x. 3.

^g Prov.

the fear of God, let the love of yourselves, and of your country, make you very careful to bring up your dear offspring well, and to set them a worthy example: and be not careless of your servants, beings as high in God's creation as yourselves, and as dear to Him as yourselves, if they be as virtuous; for consider, the better they serve God, the better will they serve you, so that self-interest shou'd even excite in you a due concern for them.—And now I shall presume to apply myself to a much greater body, *viz.* the body of Protestant Dissenters of every denomination. Let us reform, brethren, from all that is amiss among us, considering what God has done for us. Tho' some unreasonable acts are not taken out of our way, let us not be unthankful for that great blessing, the *Toleration*; nor let us use it as a license, or a legal authority, for indulging a party-spirit, or intemperate zeal against one another. For God's sake, and Christ's sake, whose honour it is that we make a stand against any that incroach upon his power, and our natural rights,—for the sake of one another, and even of ourselves; let us put off every degree of unchristian temper towards one another, bid farewell to *Calvin*, and *Luther*, to *Arminius*, and all fallible men, whether antient, or modern, as our guides and masters in religion,

ligion, and call no one master on earth, seeing we have only one master, and he is in heaven: if others will have more masters, as the Pope, or a council, a convocation, or an assembly, let them; but let not us have more, because we are *Protestant Dissenters, and the Bible, the Bible alone is our religion*: yet, alas, is there not much in our temper and behaviour, contrary to this excellent principle? Let us not, by any absurd conduct, expose for a while, and then destroy, that glorious cause we espouse: let us no longer be fond of any vicious man, because he can pronounce the *Shibboleth* of a party, and no more be cool and shy towards a good man, much less persecute him, because he cannot, — as knowing speculative notions are not virtues, tho' ever so much in the mode; nor can any involuntary errors hinder the meek, the upright, and virtuous from being accepted with God, whatever they may do here. Need we yet being told, there is no *heresy* so bad, as a bad life; nothing in any scheme that can on one hand atone for vicious tempers and practices, nor on the other, can cause a good man to perish. If God then will kindly receive a good man, though he be in the wrong in speculation, or forgive ten-thousand errors of the understanding, sooner than one

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fault

34 A S E R M O N on, &c.

fault of the will, let us go and do likewise; and, notwithstanding the divisions, and sub-divisions among us, as Presbytery, Independency, Antipedobaptism, &c. let us live in love and peace, and may the God of love and peace be with us.

And, now, it would, perhaps, be too great presumption to apply the preceeding discourse to our brethren, in the establishment, especially to the great ones in state and church.—May all, high and low, and all parties see the *real tendencies* of virtue and vice, and ever follow that which is good in itself, and good for man in every station. Amen.

F I N I S.

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